

# Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

Presentation to Delaware Early Childhood Council  
March 2016

# Best Friends



# Early Childhood Inclusion

- A joint Position Statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) April 2009

*“Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation and supports.”*



# Access, Participation and Supports

- **Access**—means providing a wide range of activities and environments for every child by removing physical barriers and offering multiple ways to promote learning and development.
- **Participation**—means using a range of instructional approaches to promote engagement in play and learning activities, and a sense of belonging for every child.
- **Supports**—refers to broader aspects of the system such as professional development, incentives for inclusion and opportunities for communication and collaboration among families and professionals to assure high quality inclusion.





# **Policy Statement on Inclusion of children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs**

U.S. Department of Education and Health and Human Services

Executive Summary

September 14, 2015

## **PURPOSE**

*The purpose of this policy statement is to set a vision and provide recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs, from the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS), for increasing the inclusion of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities in high-quality early childhood programs.*



# Inclusion Policy

- History

- 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act
- 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Head Start

Children with disabilities and their families continue to face significant barriers to accessing inclusive high-quality early childhood programs



# Inclusion Policy

It is the U.S. Department of Education and Health and Human Services' position that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with appropriate support in meeting high expectations.

# State recommendations from the *Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities*

- 1. Create a State-Level Interagency Task Force and Plan for Inclusion
- 2. Ensure State Policies are Consistent with High-Quality Inclusion
- 3. Set Goals and Track Data
- 4. Review and Modify Resource Allocation
- 5. Ensure Quality Rating Frameworks are Inclusive
- 6. Strengthen Accountability and Build Incentive Structures



# State Recommendations

- 7. Build a Coordinated Early Childhood Professional Development System
  - Build a Common Knowledge and Competency Base Across Child-Serving Providers
  - Ensure that State Certifications, Credentials and Workforce Preparation Programs have a Strong Focus on Inclusion
  - Ensure Personnel Qualification Policies Facilitate Inclusion
  - Offer Cross-Sector Professional Development and Technical Assistance



# State Recommendations

- 8. Implement Statewide Supports for Children's Social Emotional and Behavioral Health
- 9. Raise Public awareness



# Next steps

- How can Delaware ensure that all children have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs?
- Which of these recommendations should be priorities for Delaware?